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History backfires: Reminders of past injustices against women undermine support for workplace policies promoting women

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ABSTRACT

Public discourse on current inequalities often invokes past injustice endured by minorities. This rhetoric also sometimes underlies contemporary equality policies. Drawing on social identity theory and the employment equity literature, we suggest that reminding people about past injustice against a disadvantaged group (e.g., women) can invoke social identity threat among advantaged group members (e.g., men) and undermine support for employment equity (EE) policies by fostering the belief that inequality no longer exists. We find support for our hypotheses in four studies examining Canadian (three studies) and American (one study) EE policies. Overall, we found that reminders of past injustice toward women undermined men's support for an EE policy promoting women by heightening their denial of current gender discrimination. Supporting a social identity account, men's responses were mediated by collective self-esteem, and were attenuated when threat was mitigated. Reminders of past injustice did not influence women's support for the EE policy.

1. Introduction

Understanding the continued legacy of past injustices endured by traditionally disadvantaged groups in our society (i.e., women, racial minorities) is crucial for comprehending the roots of inequality today and understanding the existence of contemporary social and workplace policies promoting equality (Jetten & Wohl, 2012). In line with this notion, public discourse often invokes past injustice as one foundational justification for contemporary equality policies. For example, government-mandated equality and diversity policies, or *employment equity (EE) policies*,[1] are often rooted in the principle of compensation for past injustices against disadvantaged groups in an effort to rebalance the historically unequal playing field (Amirkhan, Betancourt, Graham, Lopez, & Weiner, 1995; Crosby, Iyer, & Sincharoen, 2006). Although the specific disadvantaged groups targeted by EE policies vary across different countries, a common feature of the target groups is that they have endured injustice in the past (Crosby et al., 2006). As such, although contemporary diversity and equality policies may not always explicitly state that they are redressing past injustices, they are linked to their nation's history of injustice and the rhetoric and framing is commonly invoked in public and social discourse (Sowell, 2004). In short, reminders of past injustice may be understood to communicate the need for equity policies and to increase policy support by deepening individuals' appreciation for how past injustice has contributed to societal systems that continue to disadvantage certain groups.

In this paper, we suggest that counter to this common intuition and the practice of invoking past injustice in the context of redressing current inequalities, reminders of past injustice may not increase support, but rather may backfire and undermine support for equality policies by advantaged groups (e.g., men, White people). In particular, drawing on social identity theory and the employment equity literature, we suggest that reminding people about past injustice and discrimination against a disadvantaged group (e.g., women) may lead to social identity threat and a defensive reaction by more advantaged groups (e.g., men). One way to protect social identity in the face of a threatening past is to minimize or deny any continued inequality in the form of current discrimination against disadvantaged groups. In turn, heightened denial of current discrimination leads to lower support for equality policies, which would be deemed unnecessary in the absence of discrimination. Thus, highlighting past injustices in an attempt to redress that injustice may have an ironic, undermining effect on support for contemporary equality policies.

We test these notions in the context of Canadian EE policies (3 studies) and American affirmative action (1 study). In Study 1, in a

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[1] Also known as affirmative action policies in the United States. Given that three out of four studies were conducted in the context of Canadian employment equity policies, we use the term employment equity throughout this paper.

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context of a Canadian EE policy, we test whether reminders of past discrimination against women in many spheres of life at the turn of the 20th century influence men's denial of current gender discrimination and consequent support for the EE policy. Study 2 seeks to replicate Study 1's results using subtler reminders of past injustice against women embedded directly into an EE policy as a rationale in the context of American affirmative action. In Study 3, we examine whether providing additional information about progress in women's rights – expected to mitigate the potential social identity threat to men – would also attenuate denial of discrimination thereby mitigating negative reactions to the EE policy. In Study 4, we aim to provide additional support for the role of social identity threat by measuring collective self-esteem and testing a moderated serial mediation in which men (but not women) support the EE policy less due to lower collective self-esteem and consequent higher denial of current gender discrimination.

Our research contributes to the EE literature by showing that the practice of documenting past injustices, and more broadly public discourse and rhetoric invoking past injustice, can backfire. Instead of enlisting support for EE policies these reminders of past injustice may undermine support of EE policies. Given that traditionally disadvantaged groups are still underrepresented in top positions (e.g., only 5.7% of the CEO positions at S&P 500 companies are occupied by women; Catalyst, 2017), understanding why such an effective policy for promoting diversity (Kalev, Dobbin, & Kelly, 2006; Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018) is evoking negative reactions is important. Further, our work answers a call for more research on how justification of EE policies affects levels of support (Harrison, Kravitz, Mayer, Leslie, & Lev-Arey, 2006), and contributes to the literature on social identity by showing that recollections of past injustices against traditionally disadvantaged groups has concrete consequences in the contemporary workplace. Finally, our work provides actionable research that organizations and managers can use when discussing equality policies to elicit support for such policies while also preserving the presentation of important historical information.

1.1. Reminders of past injustices in the context of support for equality

There are two main literatures that are relevant to the study of past injustices and support for equality, a management literature on employment equity (or affirmative action) and a social psychology literature on social identity and group processes. The literature on employment equity documents that EE policies are rooted in the attempt to redress historical injustices and discrimination against traditionally disadvantaged groups (Crosby et al., 2006; Jain, Sloane, Horwitz, Taggar, & Weiner, 2003). For example, in both Canada and the United States, the two largest groups protected by EE policies have been women and racial minorities; and members of both groups have been victims of past discrimination. Thus, information about past injustice and discrimination oftentimes complements communication of these policies to the public (Crosby et al., 2006; Jain et al., 2003). The common intuition may be that presenting such a justification would invoke a greater appreciation of the need for redress and hence increased support for EE policies.

It should be noted that while contemporary affirmative action policies in the United States no longer explicitly invoke the past injustice rationale (following much controversy on the subject), the focus on historical injustice is still to some degree prominent in the context of Canadian policies, which is the context for majority of the studies presented in this paper.[2] Moreover, while American organizations and institutions may not be very likely to invoke past injustice in their justifications of current diversity and equality policies, the rhetoric involving past injustices is still a meaningful part of public discourse surrounding diversity and equality including social and workplace policies for promoting diversity and equality and are likely a part of how people think about EE policies justification.[3]

Yet, surprisingly past research has not systematically examined whether and how such reminders of past injustice may influence support for EE policies. One recent study has established that framing an EE policy as addressing past discrimination against women (and hence invoking past injustice), compared to framing it as promoting diversity, undermines men's self-image of competence (Hideg & Ferris, 2014). Similarly, research on history and group processes and intergroup relations has also been scant (Jetten & Wohl, 2012), but the little research that does exist suggests that reminders of past group injustice may evoke defensive reactions. For example, one study showed that reminding Germans about the atrocities of the Holocaust undermined their willingness to personally compensate the victims of the Holocaust (Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010). To provide a deeper understanding of how reminders of past injustices either in a broader social and public discourse or a more formal policy communication may influence present day support for equality in the workplace, we draw on social identity theory to propose that mere reminders of past injustices towards traditionally disadvantaged groups may threaten the social identity of individuals belonging to the historical perpetrator group. In turn, threatening reminders of past harms may activate defensive mechanisms to protect social identity – which ultimately undermine their support for contemporary EE policies.

[2] To provide additional evidence that invoking past discrimination is used as a justification for EE policies in Canada, we compiled publicly available EE policies across Canadian universities (all Canadian universities are mandated to implement EE policies as they are publicly funded). We then had two independent judges (i.e., undergraduate research assistants) rate the policies on the following question: "Did the EE policy provide a justification for its existence based on addressing past discrimination, underrepresentation, and removing barriers in employment and promotions of the designated groups?" on a "yes" (coded as 1) and "no" (coded as 0) scale. The interrater reliability [ICC(1)] (Bliese, 2000) was significant and high (0.79) providing evidence for interrater reliability. The results showed that 32 out of 35 (91.43%) policies have invoked past discrimination and underrepresentation of women in their description and justification for the EE policy. To tease apart how many policies specifically talked about past discrimination (as opposed to current discrimination), we also coded the following question: "Did the EE policy provide a justification for its existence based on addressing past discrimination against the designated groups? [ICC(1) = 0.72] and found that 19 out of 35 (54%) policies were justified by invoking past discrimination. In addition, we coded how often both the discrimination and diversity justification were invoked using the following question: "Did the EE policy provide a justification for its existence based on both addressing past discrimination and promoting diversity" [ICC(1) = 0.94] and found that 18 out of 35 (51%) used both justifications.

[3] To provide some evidence for the notion that Americans may perceive past injustices as a part of the reason for existence of diversity and equality policies in the US, we conducted a survey with 100 American employees (53 women and 47 men). On a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all to*) 7 (*extremely*), participants indicate to what degree the following four reasons and justifications currently underlie the existence of diversity and equality policies such as affirmative action: (Q1) past injustice and discrimination against the groups protected and promoted by such policies; (Q2) current discrimination against the groups protected and promoted by such policies; (Q3) good business sense given our highly multicultural society; and (Q4) diversity increases productivity and performance. One-sample *t*-tests for each of the questions showed that that the mean (Q1: $M = 5.57$, $SD = 1.26$; Q2: $M = 5.23$, $SD = 1.36$; Q3: $M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.54$, Q4: $M = 4.75$, $SD = 1.63$) for each question was higher from the mid-point of the scale (i.e., 4) at $p < .001$. Moreover, the mean for the past injustice justification (Q1) was higher than the mean for either diversity justification, i.e., good business sense (Q3), $t(98) = 4.40$, $p < .001$; or increased performance (Q4), $t(98) = 4.03$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that Americans believe that past injustices against groups promoted by diversity and equality policies such as affirmative action strongly underlie the existence of such policies.

2. Theoretical development

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that people derive a sense of identity and self-worth from their membership in different social groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity) and that they are highly motivated to maintain and protect positive images of their social identities. Group history is an essential component of social identity (Jetten & Wohl, 2012; Sahdra & Ross, 2007; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008) and reminding people about past injustices committed by a valued social group they belong to threatens one's social identity, even when the self has clearly not personally played any role in those past events (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Branscombe & Miron, 2004).

Drawing on the literature on social identity and social identity threat we suggest that reminding traditionally advantaged groups in employment systems (e.g., men) of past injustices that disadvantaged groups (e.g., women) have endured will threaten their group-based social identity (e.g., for men it will threaten their group-based social identity as men). Group-based social identity threat arises when positive group images or distinctiveness are undermined by negative evaluation or information about one's social group (Branscombe et al., 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Presenting past injustices that women endured should undermine men's social identity (i.e., positive views of their gender group) because men were oftentimes the perpetrators of injustices and discrimination against women. A common reaction to a threatened social identity is a defensive distortion or denial of past injustices or a shift in blame (Branscombe et al., 1999; Branscombe & Miron, 2004).

We suggest that in the context of contemporary EE policies a defensive reaction would involve denying current discrimination against the disadvantaged group. This is because past injustices against protected groups by EE policies (i.e., women, racial minorities) are well-documented and quite widely accepted; denying that such injustices did take place in the past may be difficult given the evidence to the contrary. However, the extent of current inequality and existence of continued discrimination is more ambiguous and contested (especially given that current forms of discrimination are often subtler and covert than those openly committed in the past; Swim, Mallett, & Stangor, 2004). As a result of this interpretational flexibility, denying that injustices and discrimination *still* exist can provide a way for advantaged groups to maintain positive social identity. That is, although past injustices did take place, an emphasis on how discrimination is no longer happening mitigates threats to social identity by denying any ongoing relevance of past harms (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003).

At the same time, we expected that members of a group that has experienced injustice (i.e., women) would not deny existence of current discrimination when reminded about past injustices that their group has endured. Because their group did not perpetrate the injustice, we expected that women would not experience social identity threat (e.g., Peetz et al., 2010). However, one might speculate about whether reminders of past injustice would *increase* women's perception of discrimination. Although this is plausible, it is also equally plausible that because women have likely had experience with either witnessing or personally experiencing current gender discrimination, this would inform their perceptions of current inequality regardless of reminders of past injustices. Indeed, past research has revealed that although members of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups acknowledge that past injustice was more severe than present inequality, disadvantaged group members (e.g., women, racial minorities) are more likely to still emphasize how much work is left to be done to achieve genuine equality (Brodish, Brazy, & Devine, 2008; Eibach & Ehrlinger, 2006, 2010). Thus, we expected that reminders of past injustices increase men's denial of current gender discrimination, but would not influence women's denial of current gender discrimination. To provide a full test of this notion and establish that men (but not women) deny current discrimination when past injustices are made salient to a greater degree than when these injustices are not salient, in our studies we included a control condition where no historical injustice toward women is presented. As such, we tested the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1:. There is an interaction between participant gender and the injustice (vs. control) condition in predicting denial of current gender discrimination, such that, for men, the injustice condition results in more denial of current gender discrimination than the control condition; in contrast, the injustice (vs. control) condition is less likely to affect women's denial of current gender discrimination.

We expected that denial of current discrimination against the group protected by EE policies would, in turn, undermine support for EE policies. If existence of current discrimination is denied, then there is no obvious need for implementation of workplace equality policies whose goal is to redress discrimination and ensure equal employment of all individuals. Past research supports this reasoning. For example, past research shows that beliefs in current gender discrimination predict greater support for gender-based EE policies (Konrad & Hartmann, 2001), whereas perceptions of racial progress are related to reduced support for EE policies (Brodish et al., 2008). However, we add to these past studies a contextual factor – reminders of past injustice – that is expected to increase men's (but not women's) denial of discrimination. In turn, this denial of current gender discrimination, will predict less support for EE policies.

Hypothesis 2:. Denial of current gender discrimination mediates the interactive effect between the injustice (vs. control) condition and gender in predicting support for a gender-based EE policy.

3. Study 1 method

3.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited a sample of 141 undergraduate business students at a Canadian university who received course credit for participation.[4] Following procedures recommended by Meade and Craig (2012) for identifying careless responses in survey data, we excluded 26 participants who did not correctly answer three comprehension questions (e.g., "Respond with 'disagree' for this item"). Thus, our final sample consisted of 115 (68 women, 47 men) students who were enrolled in a co-operative (co-op) education program, meaning our sample consisted of job applicants who were applying for 4-month full-time jobs. Sixty-one participants identified as Caucasian, 30 as East Asian, 10 as South Asian, seven as Southeast Asian, five as Middle Eastern, and two as mixed (three unreported).

Participants were informed that they would complete two back-to-back but unrelated online studies, a study where they would read an excerpt about Canadian history and complete questionnaires and a study about workplace policy. In the first part of the study, participants were presented with an excerpt about Canadian history that either depicted past injustice toward women at the turn of the 20th century (i.e., *injustice condition*) or general living conditions in Canada at the

[4] We aimed for a sample size of 50 per condition (for a total of 100 for 2 conditions) consistent with a rule of thumb recommended by Simmons, Nelson and Simonsohn (2013). To account for inattentive responses, we planned to recruit 150 participants; however, due to limits of our subject pool we only recruited 141 participants, which yielded 115 responses that passed attention checks. Using G*Power software (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), we estimated that our power to detect interactions in a 2-way ANOVA with a medium effect size with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and our sample size of 115 was 76%. Given that this falls slightly short of recommended 80% power threshold (Simmons et al., 2013), we address power issues in subsequent studies using larger sample sizes. Because there was no past research on which to base effect size estimates, we estimated a medium effect size; in subsequent studies where appropriate effect size is estimated based on our prior studies.

turn of the 20th century (i.e., *control condition*; see below). After reading the excerpt they completed a measure assessing their denial of current gender discrimination. In the second part of the study, all participants were presented with a policy ostensibly under development by their university co-op program: an employment equity policy promoting the hiring of women (see below). Participants subsequently completed questionnaires assessing their support for the EE policy and they also reported their demographics (i.e., gender).

3.2. Materials

Injustice manipulation. Participants read one of the two paragraphs depicting Canada at the turn of the 20th century that were developed in previous published research (i.e., Peetz et al., 2010). In the *injustice condition*, they read about discriminatory and unjust treatment of women such as, for example, that women were underrepresented in the workplace, that they were not allowed to vote, run for office, or own property. Although the information provided in this condition presents a blatant example of historical discrimination not necessarily seen in actual EE policies, the information is in line with broader public discourse on inequality and also with information presented on the website of Government of Canada when describing women's right and protections in place such as EE policies (for example, please see https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/rights-women.html). In the *control condition*, they read about general living conditions such as, for example, that very few people owned a car, that most people lived on a farm, and that people did not have radio or television (see Appendix A).

EE policy. Participants read about an EE policy related to hiring students into co-op jobs at their university with preference given to women, which was adapted from previously published research (Hideg & Ferris, 2014, 2017; Hideg, Michela, & Ferris, 2011). Co-op jobs are full-time, paid, semester-long job placements related to students' field of study where students gain practical skills and work experience. These jobs are highly valuable for students' future careers, and an EE policy that affects co-op hiring would be seen as very relevant and influential on their career. The EE policy proposed a 55% target hiring rate for women to increase the hiring rate of women in positions in which they are currently underrepresented - with the caveat that this preferential hiring should only occur when the candidates possessed equal qualifications (see Appendix B).

3.3. Measures

All measures in our paper use a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 4 = *neither agree nor disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*).

Denial of gender discrimination. We adapted a 5-item measure developed and used by Stephens and Levine (2011) to assess denial of gender discrimination. Specifically, we replaced references to "America" with references to "Canada." Sample items include "Canadian society provides men and women with equal opportunities for achievement" and "Women often say that they are discriminated against when they aren't" ($\alpha = .68$).

Support for the EE policy. In line with past literature on EE (e.g., Harrison et al., 2006), we operationalized support for the policy in terms of favorable attitudes toward the policy and behavioral intentions to promote the policy. Attitudes were measured with a six-item scale from Kravitz and Platania (1993) (e.g., "The EE policy that I read about would constitute a good policy"; $\alpha = .85$). Behavioral intentions were measured with an eight-item scale developed and used in past research (Hideg et al., 2011; Hideg & Ferris, 2014, 2016, 2017). Participants rated how likely they would be to engage in behaviors that promote the EE policy (e.g., "Volunteer for one day at an information booth to create public awareness about this policy"; $\alpha = .92$).

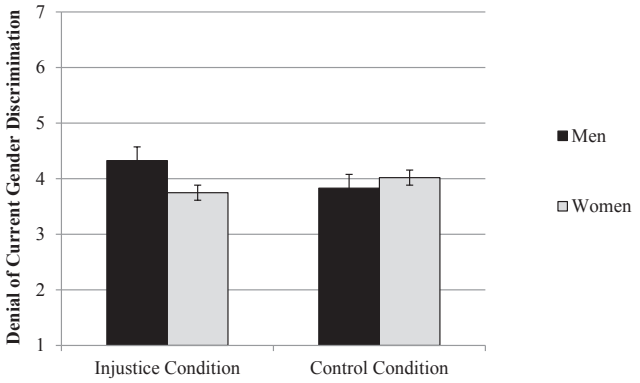

Fig. 1. Interaction between injustice condition vs. control condition and participant gender in predicting denial of current gender discrimination in Study 1.

3.4. Study 1 results

3.4.1. Interaction results in predicting denial of discrimination

We first tested whether there is an interaction between participant gender and condition in predicting denial of current gender discrimination (Hypothesis 1) using a 2 (injustice vs. control condition) × 2 (women vs. men) analysis of variance (ANOVA). There was no main effect of either condition, $F(1, 111) = 0.45$, $p = .504$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$, or gender, $F(1, 111) = 1.35$, $p = .248$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$. However, as expected, there was an interaction between condition and gender, $F(1, 111) = 5.27$, $p = .024$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$ (see Fig. 1). We followed up on this interaction with simple effect analyses. Supporting Hypothesis 1, men denied gender discrimination more in the injustice condition ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.93$) than in the control condition ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(1,111) = 5.17$, $p = .025$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$; there were no such differences for women (injustice condition: $M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.94$; control condition: $M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.72$), $F(1,111) = 1.17$, $p = .281$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Further, men denied gender discrimination more than women in the injustice condition, $F(1,111) = 7.13$, $p = .009$, $\eta_p^2 = .06$; there were no such differences in the control condition, $F(1,111) = 0.25$, $p = .621$, $\eta_p^2 = .005$.

3.4.2. Moderated mediation

We further proposed an overall moderated mediation model (see Fig. 2) in which exposure to past gender discrimination undermines men's, but not women's, support for contemporary policies promoting the hiring of women (i.e., EE policies) due to a greater denial of current gender discrimination. To test this hypothesis, we used Hayes (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 7), which tests for moderated mediation using two regression models and bias-corrected bootstrapping technique (with 10,000 samples) to compute conditional indirect effect. The first regression model estimates the interaction between condition and gender in predicting denial of gender discrimination. The second regression model estimates the effect of denial of gender discrimination on support for the EE policy (attitudes and behavioral intentions) while controlling for the effect of condition, gender, and their interaction.

In the first regression, as described above, there was a significant interaction between the injustice (vs. control) condition and gender in predicting denial of gender discrimination. In the second regression, there was no significant effect of denial of gender discrimination on attitudes, $b = -0.24$, $t(112) = -1.87$, $p = .064$, and behavioral intentions, $b = -0.12$, $t(112) = -0.69$, $p = .492$. Although the effect of denial of discrimination on attitudes was not significant, as predicted, the conditional indirect effect of the injustice (vs. control) condition on attitudes via denial of discrimination was significant for men (conditional indirect effect = −0.12, 95% confidence intervals [CI] = −0.35, −0.01), but not for women (conditional indirect effect = 0.06, 95% CI = −0.02, 0.27). Further, the index of moderated

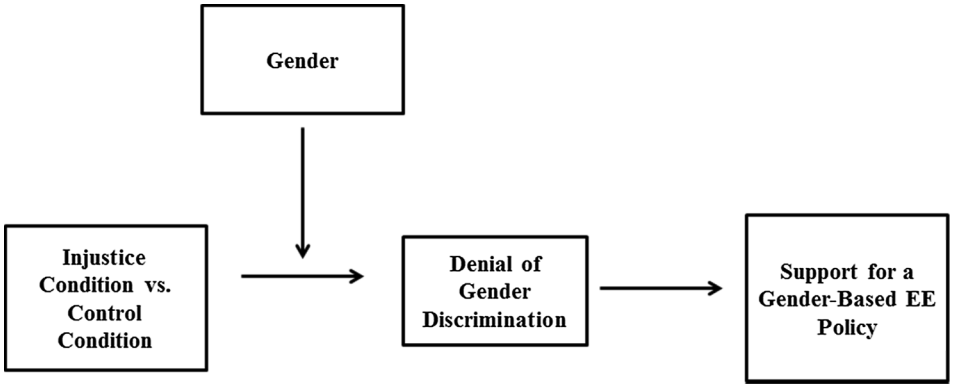

Fig. 2. Moderated mediation model tested in Study 1 and 2.

mediation (i.e., the test of equality of the conditional indirect effects in the two groups, men and women) was also significant (index = 0.18, 95% CI = 0.01, 0.55) indicating that the two indirect effects were different from each other. As such, men, but not women, who were presented with past gender discrimination had less favorable attitudes toward a contemporary EE policy promoting the hiring of women due to a greater denial of current gender discrimination. The conditional indirect effect was not significant when predicting behavioral intentions. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported for one index of support, i.e., attitudes.[5]

3.5. Discussion

Study 1 provides initial evidence that reminding people about past injustice may be threatening and lead to a defensive reaction. In particular, we found that men who were reminded about past injustice toward women were more likely to deny existence of current discrimination compared to women and to men who were not reminded about such injustice. Women who were reminded about past injustice toward women, however, did not deny (or amplify) existence of current discrimination compared to women who were not reminded about such injustice. Further, in a moderated mediated model we found that men's greater denial of current discrimination when reminded about past gender injustice was, in turn, related to lower support for a contemporary workplace policy promoting the hiring of women (i.e., a gender-based EE policy).

4. Study 2

Although Study 1 provides preliminary support for our model, it has limitations: While participants in Study 1 were actual student job applicants and the proposed EE policy would have direct implications for their own hiring, our participants had limited work experience and likely minimal exposure to EE policies and past injustices, which could have influenced their reactions. As such, in Study 2 we test our model in a sample of American workers to establish the external validity and generalizability of our findings. Further, in Study 1, the historical injustice was not presented as a part of the EE policy, that is, as a rationale for the use of an EE policy. Thus, it could be that while men may find threatening reminders of past injustices toward women, they may potentially feel less threatened if that reminder is contextualized as a rationale for the EE policy. To establish that reminders of past injustice toward women contextualized as a rationale for the EE policy are still threatening to men, in Study 2 we use an EE policy with an embedded justification focused on past discrimination against women and we test the same hypotheses as in Study 1. Finally, we sought to expand the breadth of our dependent variables by examining an additional index of support for the EE policy, namely organizational attractiveness.

4.1. Method

4.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited a sample of 257 American employees using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Mturk), an online platform for web-based survey and experimental data collections (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).[6] Mturk samples provide high quality data and are relevant for studying organizational phenomena (e.g., support for EE policies; Buhrmester et al., 2011; Casler, Bickel, & Hackett, 2013). We excluded 16 participants who did not correctly pass three embedded attention checks (Meade & Craig, 2012). Thus, our final sample consisted of 241 (107 women, 134 men; age: M = 36.82, SD = 10.73; work experience: M = 13.71 years, SD = 10.39) employees. Two hundred and nine participants identified as Caucasian, 10 as East or South Asian, 10 as Hispanic, six as Black, and five as mixed (one unreported). Further, 220 participants were employed in full-time positions and 17 participants were employed in part-time positions across a range of different occupations (e.g., finance, retail, health care, engineering, administration, etc.); 4 indicated "other" (contract, self-employed, etc.).

Participants completed an online survey posted on Mturk and were compensated $3.00 for their participation. They were first presented with one of the two versions of an EE policy: an EE policy with a past discrimination justification (i.e., injustice condition) or an EE policy that did not invoke a past discrimination justification (i.e., control condition; see below). Following the policy presentation, participants completed questionnaires assessing their denial of current gender inequality, support for the EE policy, and they reported their demographics (i.e., gender).

[5] In this and subsequent studies, a gender main effect was observed revealing more support for EE among women (average across all studies: attitudes M = 4.78, SD = 1.24; behavioral intentions M = 3.83, SD = 1.54; organizational attractiveness M = 4.65, SD = 1.61) than men (attitudes M = 3.91, SD = 1.50; behavioral intentions M = 2.83, SD = 1.51; organizational attractiveness M = 3.44, SD = 1.76). Thus, while women's support was slightly above the mid-point of the scale (4 = *neither agree nor disagree*) (except for behavioral intentions) indicating mild support for the proposed EE policy, men's support fell under the mid-point of the scale suggesting mild lack of support for the proposed EE policy. These findings replicate past literature; because it is not new and not the focus of this research, it will not be discussed further.

[6] Our power analysis using G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that the sample size needed for detecting an interaction in a 2-way ANOVA using effect size observed in Study 1 (η_p^2 = 0.05) with a significance level of α = 0.05 and 80% power would be 152. We aimed to recruit around 250 participants to account for inattentive participants and possible smaller effects in a sample of working adults.

4.1.2. EE policy and injustice manipulation

The EE policy participants read was similar to the EE policy presented in Study 1 with two important exceptions. First, the policy included a justification for its use, i.e., past discrimination against women, and this justification was a manipulation of injustice. In addition to providing a justification based on past discrimination, another common justification is that EE policies promote diversity, which is an imperative to being successful in today's globalized workplace (Hideg & Ferris, 2014; Kidder, Lankau, Chrobot-Mason, & Friedman, 2004). To rule out a possibility that a preference for the diversity justification may drive the differences between the two policies, both the injustice and control condition EE policy included the diversity justification. Thus, *the injustice condition* presented an EE policy including two justifications (past discrimination against women and diversity), whereas *the control condition* presented an EE policy that used only the diversity justification. Second, unlike Study 1, the proposed EE policy did not apply to participants' own job search and hiring, but rather the policy applied to the hiring process in a company not related to them called INDSCO (this name was taken from previous research using a company not familiar to participants; James, Brief, Dietz, & Cohen, 2001) (see Appendix C).

4.1.3. Measures

We used the same measures as in Study 1 to assess attitudes ($\alpha = .94$) and behavioral intentions ($\alpha = .97$). Because we focused on a workplace sample and an EE policy, we used a belief in discrimination measure that focused more squarely on workplace discrimination (Konrad & Hartmann, 2001). Items included "Women experience discrimination in hiring or promotion decisions (R)," "Perhaps there used to be sex discrimination against women at the workplace, but this is not the case today" and "Promotion decisions are sex biased so that men are advantaged (R)." Items were rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), and recoded so that high scores indicate greater denial of workplace gender discrimination ($\alpha = .88$). We also added a three-item organizational attractiveness measure (e.g., "I would be attracted to an organization that implements a similar EE policy for women"; $\alpha = .98$; Cropanzano, Slaughter, & Bachiochi, 2005).

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Interaction result in predicting denial of discrimination

As in Study 1, we conducted a 2 (injustice vs. control condition) × 2 (women vs. men) ANOVA predicting denial of workplace gender discrimination. There was no main effect of condition, $F(1, 237) = 0.52$, $p = .47$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$, but there was a main effect of gender, $F(1, 237) = 16.12$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .064$. On average, men denied the existence of current gender discrimination ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 1.59$) more than women ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.62$). However, this main effect of gender was qualified by the interaction between condition and gender, $F(1, 237) = 4.39$, $p = .037$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (see Fig. 3). As expected, men denied workplace discrimination to a greater degree in the injustice ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.65$) than the control condition ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.51$), $F(1,237) = 4.47$, $p = .036$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, whereas women did not differ across conditions (injustice condition: $M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.54$; control condition: $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.58$), $F(1,237) = 0.85$, $p = .36$, $\eta_p^2 = .004$). Further, men denied gender discrimination more than women in the injustice condition, $F(1,237) = 18.68$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .07$; there were no such differences in the control condition, $F(1,237) = 1.84$, $p = .18$, $\eta_p^2 = .008$.

4.2.2. Moderated mediation

As in Study 1, we used Hayes's PROCESS macro (Model 7) to test the overall moderated mediation model. In the first regression, as described above, there was a significant interaction between the injustice (vs. control) condition and gender in predicting denial of gender discrimination. In the second regression, there was a significant effect of denial of gender discrimination on attitudes, $b = -0.77$, $t(240) = -15.46$, $p < .001$, behavioral intentions, $b = -0.68$, $t(240) = -11.09$, $p < .001$, and organizational attractiveness, $b = -0.87$, $t(240) = -14.57$, $p < .001$. For each of the three indices of the policy support, the conditional indirect effect was significant for men (attitudes = −0.44, 95% CI = −0.89, −0.06; behavioral intentions = −0.39, 95% CI = −0.79, −0.02; organizational attractiveness = −0.50, 95% CI = −0.98, −0.05), but not for women (attitudes = 0.22, 95% CI = −0.23, 0.66; behavioral intentions = 0.19, 95% CI = −0.24, 0.58; organizational attractiveness = 0.24, 95% CI = −0.27, 0.79). Further, the index of moderated mediation was also significant for all three indices of the policy support, attitudes (index = 0.66, 95% CI = 0.05, 1.30), behavioral intentions (index = 0.58, 95% CI = 0.06, 1.20), and organizational attractiveness (index = 0.75, 95% CI = 0.05, 1.44), indicating that the two indirect effects (for men and women) were different from each other. Thus, as expected, men, but not women, who were presented with an EE policy that made salient past gender discrimination (vs. a control that did not mention historical injustices) were more apt to deny the existence of current workplace gender discrimination, which in turn predicted more negative reactions toward the EE policy.

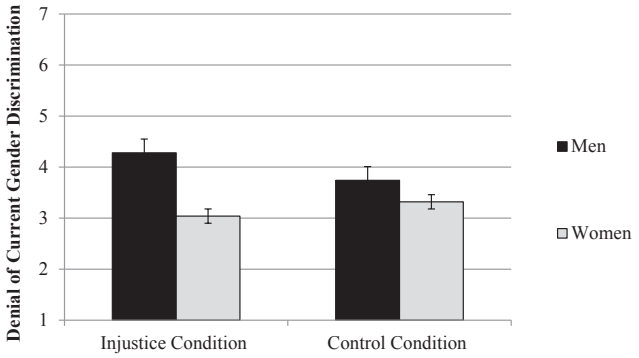

Fig. 3. Interaction between an EE policy with past injustice justification (i.e., injustice condition) vs. EE policy with no past injustice justification (i.e., control condition) and participant gender in predicting denial of current gender discrimination in Study 2.

4.3. Discussion

The results of Study 2 replicated and extended our Study 1 findings in a context where past injustice reminders were embedded in a rationale given for an EE policy and also in the context of an American affirmative action policy. In particular, men (but not women) denied the existence of current gender discrimination more when presented with an EE policy which incorporated a past discrimination justification (in addition to a diversity justification) than when a policy did not include historical injustice in its justification (but only included a diversity justification), and in turn they supported the EE policy less. Thus, Study 2 provides additional evidence that reminding people about past injustice may be threatening for the supposed perpetrators of injustice and lead to a defensive reaction.

5. Study 3

Given that understanding past injustice is important for understanding inequality today, that public discourse on equality (as well as some EE policies) commonly implicate past injustice, it is important for policy makers to know about potential backfire effects and how to mitigate them. In Study 3 we sought a way to alleviate the social identity threat posed by exposure to past injustice. Theoretically, mitigating social identity threat should attenuate defensive reactions, hence men should be more likely to acknowledge (rather than deny) current discrimination which in turn would predict greater support for

contemporary diversity and equality policies promoting women. Conversely, a threat-mitigation manipulation is not expected to affect women's responses (since their social identities are not threatened in the first place). Specifically, in Study 3 we presented all participants with the reminders of past injustice against women at the turn of the 20th century, but then provided additional information about subsequent gains in women's rights in the *mitigated injustice condition*. We expected that emphasizing subsequent advances in women's rights would offer men absolution from previous wrongdoing perpetrated by their group by signifying the end of some types of institutional discrimination. We put forward the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3:. There is an interaction between participant gender and the injustice (vs. mitigated injustice) condition in predicting denial of current gender discrimination, such that, for men, the injustice condition results in more denial of current gender discrimination than the mitigated injustice condition; in contrast, injustice (vs. mitigated injustice) condition is less likely to affect women's denial of current gender discrimination.

Hypothesis 4:. Denial of current gender discrimination mediates the interactive effect between the injustice vs. (mitigated injustice) condition and gender in predicting support for a gender-based EE policy.

5.1. Method

5.1.1. Participants and procedure

We recruited a sample of 232 undergraduate business students at a Canadian university who received course credit for participation.[7] As in Study 1 and 2 we excluded 14 participants who did not correctly answer three attention questions (e.g., "Respond with 'disagree' for this item"; Meade & Craig, 2012). Thus, our final sample consisted of 218 (109 women, 109 men) students. As in Study 1, participants were informed that they would complete two back-to-back but unrelated online studies. In the first part of Study 3, all participants were presented with an excerpt about Canadian history that depicted past injustice toward women at the turn of 20th century (see injustice condition in Appendix A). Further, half of participants were randomly assigned to read an additional paragraph that described gains in women's rights since the turn of the 20th century such as receiving the right to vote, to run for the office, and to own property (i.e., *mitigated injustice condition*, see Appendix D). This procedure for mitigating past injustice was adapted from previous published work (Peetz et al., 2010). The purpose of this additional paragraph was to mitigate the social identity threat that men may experience by being exposed to past injustice toward women (largely perpetrated by men), by showing that things have improved. Next, all participants completed a measure assessing their denial of current gender discrimination. In the second part of Study 3, participants were presented with the same EE policy as used in Study 1 and completed the same measures as in Study 1 and 2.

5.1.2. Measures

We used the measures of denial of general gender discrimination from Study 1 (Stephens & Levine, 2011; 5 items; $\alpha = .68$) and perception of workplace discrimination from Study 2 (Konrad & Hartmann, 2001; 3 items; $\alpha = .66$). Because the internal consistency was higher for the aggregated 8-item scale ($\alpha = .79$) than either scale alone, we combined all items into one measure; higher scores indicate greater denial of gender discrimination. We also included the same measures of policy attitudes ($\alpha = .90$), and behavioral intentions ($\alpha = .91$) as in Study 1 and 2, and the same measure as in Study 2 to assess organizational attractiveness ($\alpha = .96$).

5.2. Results

5.2.1. Interaction result in predicting denial of discrimination

The purpose of Study 3 was to test whether presenting information about gains in women's rights would mitigate potential threat that men experience when presented with past gender injustice, leading them to be less inclined to deny current gender discrimination. To test this prediction, we conducted a 2 (injustice vs. mitigated injustice condition) × 2 (women vs. men) ANOVA predicting denial of current gender discrimination. There was no main effect of condition, $F(1, 214) = 1.38$, $p = .24$, $\eta_p^2 = .006$, but there was a main effect of gender, $F(1, 214) = 44.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .17$. On average, men denied current gender discrimination ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.71$) more than women ($M = 3.37$, $SD = 0.85$). This main effect was qualified by the expected interaction between condition and gender, $F(1, 214) = 3.89$, $p = .049$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$ (see Fig. 4). Supporting Hypothesis 3, men denied gender discrimination less in the mitigated injustice condition ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.71$) than in the injustice condition ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.67$), $F(1, 214) = 4.98$, $p = .027$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$; there were no such differences for women (mitigated injustice condition: $M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.87$; injustice condition: $M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.85$), $F(1, 214) = 0.32$, $p = .57$, $\eta_p^2 = .002$). Further analyses, however, revealed that although presenting additional information about gains in women's rights did reduce men's denial of current gender discrimination to a degree, those levels were still higher than women's levels. Namely, men denied gender discrimination more than women in both the injustice condition, $F(1, 214) = 39.79$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$, and the mitigated injustice condition, $F(1, 214) = 10.59$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$.

5.2.2. Moderated mediation

We used the same procedures as in Study 1 and 2 to test the overall moderated mediation model. In the first regression, as described above, there was an interaction between the injustice (vs. mitigated injustice) condition and gender in predicting denial of current gender discrimination. In the second regression, there was a significant effect of denial of gender discrimination on attitudes, $b = -0.63$, $t(217) = -6.57$, $p < .001$, behavioral intentions, $b = -0.43$, $t(218) = -3.77$, $p < .001$, and organizational attractiveness, $b = -0.69$, $t(218) = -5.65$, $p < .001$. The conditional indirect effect was significant for men when predicting all outcomes (conditional indirect effect for attitudes = 0.21, 95% CI = 0.05, 0.42; behavioral intentions = 0.14, 95% CI = 0.04, 0.31; organizational attractiveness = 0.23, 95% CI = 0.08, 0.48), but not for women (conditional indirect effect for attitudes = −0.04, 95% CI = −0.26, 0.17; behavioral intentions = −0.04, 95% CI = −0.19, 0.09; organizational attractiveness = −0.06, 95% CI = −0.29, 0.18). Further, the index of moderated mediation was also significant for all three indices of the policy support, attitudes (index = −0.23, 95% CI = −0.57, −0.003), behavioral intentions (index = −0.18, 95% CI = −0.43, −0.02), and organizational attractiveness (index = −0.29, 95% CI = −0.65, −0.02). Thus, supporting Hypothesis 4, men, who were presented with information about gains in women's rights (in addition to information on past gender discrimination) denied the existence of current gender discrimination less than men who were presented only with information on past gender discrimination, and in turn supported an EE policy promoting the hiring of women to a greater degree.

5.3. Discussion

In Study 3 we found that when threat to men's identity was mitigated by presenting information about advancements of women's rights

[7] As in Study 2, our power analysis using G*Power software (Faul et al., 2007) indicated that the sample size needed for detecting an interaction in a 2-way ANOVA using effect size observed in Study 1 ($\eta_p^2 = 0.05$) with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ and 80% power would be 152. We aimed to recruit around 250 participants to account for inattentive participants and we ended up recruiting 232 participants, yielding 218 responses that passed attention checks.

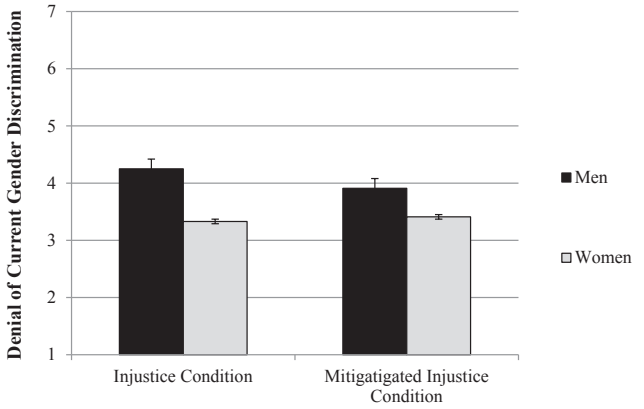

Fig. 4. Interaction between injustice condition vs. mitigated injustice condition and participant gender in predicting denial of current gender discrimination in Study 3.

(i.e., injustice toward women has been repaired and remedied) they were less likely to deny the existence of current gender discrimination compared to men who did not receive such mitigating information about the improvement of women's rights. We further found that lower denial of gender discrimination was related to men's enhanced support for a contemporary gender-based EE policy.

The results of this study provided additional evidence for the underlying mechanism of social identity by showing that providing evidence that women's status has improved deflected threats to men's social identity and consequently improved their support for a policy promoting the employment of women. This finding is also practically important as the acknowledgment and description of past injustice is foundational for many contemporary social policies, including EE, and is common in social discourse. Presenting information about historical injustice is surely well-intentioned, and in many cases expected as justifications of EE policy, hence finding a way to overcome the potential for these communications to backfire helps ensure that these messages do not inadvertently undermine support for the very policies they intend to bolster.

6. Study 4

In Study 4, we first sought to provide additional evidence for the underlying social identity mechanism proposed to account for why men who are reminded of past injustices perpetrated by their group might react defensively: because the reminder threatens the positive social identity stemming from that group. To assess threats to men's group-based social identity we measured gender-based collective self-esteem, an approach in line with past social identity research (Does, Derks, & Ellemers, 2011; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005; Scheepers, Ellemers, & Sintemaartensdijk, 2009). In particular, we examine whether men's (but not women's) collective self-esteem is lower following an exposure to past injustices against women and test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5:. There is an interaction between participant gender and the injustice (vs. control) condition in predicting collective self-esteem, such that men have lower collective self-esteem in the injustice condition than in the control condition; in contrast, the injustice (vs. control) condition is less likely to affect women's collective self-esteem.

Integrating collective self-esteem in our previously tested model (moderated mediation model tested in Study 1 and 2), we test a more comprehensive model in which men (but not women) experience lower collective self-esteem when exposed to past injustices against women (vs. control condition), which in turn predicts higher denial of current gender discrimination, and is consequently related to lower support for the EE policy. That is, we are proposing a moderated serial mediation model (see Fig. 5):

Hypothesis 6:. Collective self-esteem and denial of current gender discrimination mediate sequentially the interactive effect between the injustice (vs. control) condition and gender in predicting support for a gender-based EE policy.

In addition, in Study 4 we also address the possibility that men's negative reactions to past injustices could have been due to exposing them to fairly extreme cases of past discrimination from the relatively distant past, which might make the subtler discrimination of today (at least in Western countries) harder to see by contrast. That is, it could be that men were more likely to deny current gender discrimination because the extreme, legal discrimination depicted in our scenarios (e.g., denial of the right to vote, run for office, or own property) is (correctly) perceived as non-existent today creating a contrast effect (i.e., compared to the historical discrimination that women endured, women today are not being discriminated against). A couple of findings argue against a pure contrast effect account and in favor of a social identity account. First, women might be expected to be affected by a purely comparative contrast effect but they are not (suggesting at the very least that the contrast is less pronounced for the group more likely to have encountered current discrimination). Second, our Study 3 exposes everyone to the same stark reminders of injustice, but men's denial of discrimination is attenuated when the threat is mitigated – a finding more consistent with a social identity account than a contrast effect account.

Nonetheless, given that all three studies refer to a fairly distant and extreme past, we sought to more fully address this alternative mechanism (i.e., contrast effect) in one additional manner. We present temporally closer instances of injustices that women endured in 1970s (which were more informal and less dramatically different from today) instead of injustices from the turn of the 20th century. The measure of collective self-esteem (included to test the social identity mechanism) provides another means of testing a contrast effect account. If responses are simply driven by contrast effects, collective self-esteem should not be affected. If, however, the effects are driven by the social identity threat, a drop in collective self-esteem is expected for men in the injustice condition.

6.1. Method

We recruited a sample of 380 undergraduate business students at a

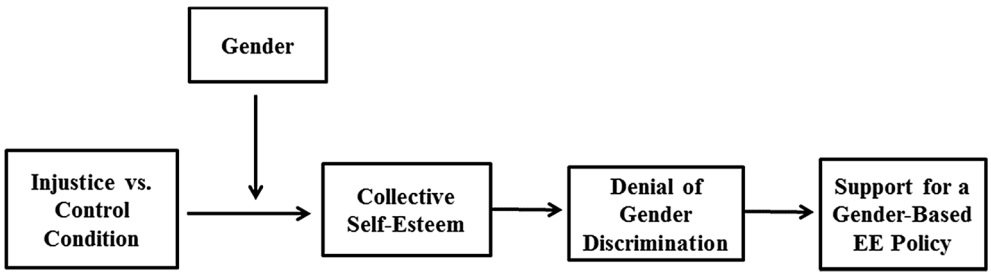

Fig. 5. Moderated serial mediation model tested in Study 4.

Canadian university who received partial course credit for participation.[8] As in previous studies, we excluded 45 participants who did not correctly answer three attention questions. Thus, our final sample consisted of 335 (179 women, 155 men, and one unidentified) students. Given that participants' gender was a main factor analyzed, we used a sample of 334 with gender identified for all analyses presented below. Further, 185 participants identified as Caucasian, 64 as East Asian, 51 as Southeast Asian, nine as South Asian, four as Middle Eastern, four as Black, three as West Indian and nine as mixed (four unreported).

In line with other studies in this paper, participants were informed that they would complete two back-to-back but unrelated online studies. In the first part of Study 4, participants were presented with an excerpt about Canadian history that depicted past injustice toward women in the 1970s (i.e., *injustice condition*) or general living conditions in Canada in the 1970s (i.e., *control condition*; see Appendix E). After reading the excerpt, they completed a measure assessing their denial of current gender discrimination. In the second part of the study, participants were presented with the same EE policy used in Study 1 and 3, and completed the same measures assessing participants' support for the EE policy. Finally, participants completed in a separate part a measure of collective self-esteem.[9]

6.1.1. Measures

We adapted a 16-item collective self-esteem scale developed by Luhtanen and Crocker (1992) to assess participants' gender-based collective self-esteem. In particular, we adapted items such that they referred to participants' membership in their gender group (e.g., "Overall, my gender group is considered good by others") as opposed their membership in more general social groups (e.g., "Overall, my social groups are considered good by others"). This 16-item scale consists of four sub-dimensions: membership (e.g., "I am a worthy member of the gender group I belong to"; α = .73), private (e.g., "I feel good about the gender group I belong to"; α = .77), public (e.g., "Overall, my social groups are considered good by others"; α = .69), and identity (e.g., "The gender group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am"; α = .69). For our analyses we used the overall collective self-esteem score computed as an average of 15 items[10] (α = .84). As in Study 3, we used the same eight-item measure (α = .83) to assess denial of gender discrimination. We also used the same measures of policy attitudes (α = .87), behavioral intentions (α = .93), and organizational attractiveness (α = .96).

6.2. Results

6.2.1. Interaction result in predicting collective self-esteem

To test the predicted interaction in Hypothesis 5, we conducted a 2 (injustice vs. control condition) × 2 (women vs. men) ANOVA predicting collective self-esteem. There was a main effect of condition, $F(1, 330) = 6.27$, $p = .013$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, with lower collective self-esteem in the injustice condition ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.74$) than in the control condition ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 0.72$). There was also a main effect of gender, $F(1, 330) = 7.11$, $p = .008$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$, with men having lower collective self-esteem ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 0.80$) than women ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 0.67$). These main effects, however, were qualified by the expected interaction between condition and gender, $F(1, 330) = 9.48$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ (see Fig. 6). Supporting Hypothesis 5, men had lower collective self-esteem in the injustice condition ($M = 4.68$, $SD = 0.79$) than in the control condition ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 0.77$), $F(1, 330) = -3.81$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$; there were no such differences for women (injustice condition: $M = 5.16$, $SD = 0.66$; control condition: $M = 5.10$, $SD = 0.73$), $F(1, 330) = 0.42$, $p = .673$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$). Further, men had lower collective self-esteem than women in the injustice condition, $F(1, 330) = 4.064$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$, whereas self-esteem did not differ for men and women in the control condition, $F(1, 330) = -0.29$, $p = .770$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$.

6.2.2. Moderated serial mediation models

Hypothesis 6 proposed that collective self-esteem and denial of current gender discrimination mediate sequentially the interactive effect between the injustice (vs. control) condition in predicting support for a gender-based EE policy. That is, we proposed a moderated serial mediation model (see Fig. 5). To test this proposed moderated serial mediation model we used PROCESS macro (model 83; Hayes, 2017), which entails estimating three regression models and testing the significance of the indirect effect of the injustice (vs. control) condition (IV) on support for a gender-based EE policy (DV) via collective self-esteem (M1) and denial of current gender discrimination (M2) for men and women. The first regression model estimated the interactive effect between injustice (vs. control) condition and participant gender in predicting collective self-esteem; the second regression model estimated the effect of collective self-esteem (first mediator) on denial of current gender discrimination (second mediator); and the third regression model estimated the effect of denial of current gender discrimination (second mediator) on support for EE policy. We ran three separate moderated serial mediation models, one for each of our indices of support for the EE policy (attitudes, behavioral intentions, and organizational attractiveness). Table 1 presents all moderated serial mediation model coefficients across three indices of support for the EE policy.

As seen in Table 1, the interactive effect between condition and participant gender in predicting collective self-esteem was significant (i.e., first regression model; this interaction is also discussed above in detail); the relationship between (a) collective self-esteem and denial of current gender discrimination (i.e., second regression model) and (b) current denial of gender discrimination and indices of support for the EE policy (i.e., third regression model), are all significant. Next, we present tests of conditional indirect effects.

When predicting attitudes, the conditional indirect effect was significant for men (conditional indirect effect = −0.04, 95% CI [−0.10, −0.002]), but not for women (conditional indirect effect = 0.01, 95% CI [−0.02, 0.03]). Further, the index of moderated mediation (i.e., the test of the equality of the conditional indirect effects in two groups) was also significant (index = 0.05, 95% CI [0.001, 0.12]) attesting that the two conditional indirect effects were indeed different from each other. Similarly, when predicting behavioral intentions, the conditional indirect effect was significant for men (conditional indirect effect = −0.04, 95% CI [−0.10, −0.0002]), but not for women (conditional indirect effect = 0.01, 95% CI [−0.02,0.03]); and the index of moderated mediation was significant (index = 0.05, 95% CI [0.001, 0.12]). Finally, when predicting organizational attractiveness, the conditional indirect effect was significant for men (conditional indirect effect = −0.05, 95% CI [−0.13, −0.002]), but not for women (conditional indirect effect = 0.01, 95% CI [−0.02,0.04]); and the index of

[8] Given that main analyses in Study 4 involved an interaction between injustice (vs. control) condition and participant gender in predicting collective self-esteem, a variable not measured in previous studies in this paper, we did not have an estimate for effect size to guide our power estimation. To ensure we have enough power for our analyses, we aimed to recruit around 400 participants. Due to limits of our subject pool we recruited only 380 participants yielding 335 responses that passed attention checks. Using G*Power software, we estimated that our power to detect interactions in a 2-way ANOVA with a medium effect size with a significance level of α = 0.05 and our sample size of 335 was 89%.

[9] We framed the measure of collective self-esteem as a separate investigation to reduce experimental demand and avoid participant suspicion that we were attempting to influence their collective self-esteem with the injustice information.

[10] After data collection, we realized that one item was mistakenly truncated, reading "Others respect gender" instead of "Others respect the gender group that I am a member of." As such, we took that item out of the overall collective self-esteem composite that we used for analyses.

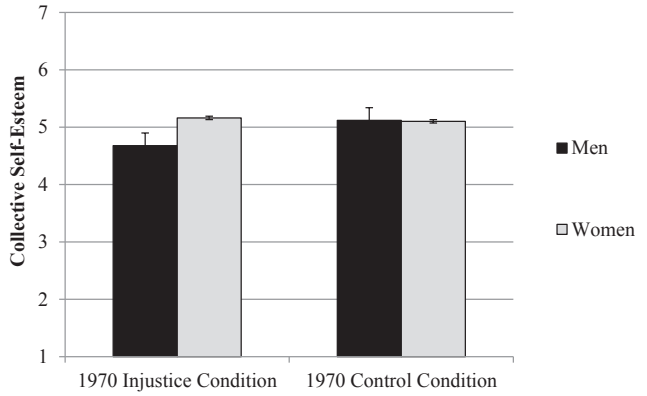

Fig. 6. Interaction between injustice condition vs. control condition and participant gender in predicting collective self-esteem in Study 4.

moderated mediation was significant (index = 0.04, 95% CI [0.001, 0.15. Thus, supporting Hypothesis 6, men, but not women, who were presented with historical injustice against women (compared to a control condition), had lower collective self-esteem, which in turn was related with higher denial of current gender discrimination, and consequently with less positive attitudes, lower behavioral intentions, and lower organizational attractiveness to a company that promoted the EE policy.

6.3. Discussion

Study 4 provided additional insights on the underlying mechanisms of the social identity threat experienced by men by examining collective self-esteem. In particular, men who were reminded of past injustices against women had lower collective self-esteem compared to men who were not reminded of such injustices (control condition) and women both reminded and not reminded of such injustices. Also as expected, women's collective self-esteem was not influenced by the reminder of past injustices. Further, in a moderated serial mediation we found that men's lower collective self-esteem when reminded about past injustice against women was, in turn, related to higher denial of current gender discrimination, and denial was related with lower support for a gender-based EE policy. This study also shows that reminders of past injustices undermine indirectly men's support for gender-based EE policies through lower collective self-esteem and higher denial of current gender discrimination even when temporally closer reminders of past injustices against women are invoked (i.e., injustices from the 1970s).

At the same time, it should be noted that while we found evidence for the overall predicted moderated serial mediation model, the interaction between the injustice (vs. control) condition and participant gender in predicting denial of current gender discrimination, which was observed in previous studies, was not observed here $F(1, 330) = 0.32$, $p = .569$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$. One reason for this might be that in Study 4 participants were exposed to more recent instances of discrimination from the 1970s, which compared to the discrimination instances from the turn of the 20th century, were not as extreme and could be seen as still happening today. As such, denial of current gender discrimination may be more of a distal outcome with collective self-esteem being the more proximal outcome to temporally closer instances of discrimination against women. Thus, to some degree it seems that the direct effects of past injustice on denial of current gender discrimination are stronger when the injustice presented is more temporally distant and extreme; yet the indirect effects still exist and operate through collective self-esteem as theorized. Accordingly, the Study 4 collective self-esteem mechanism shows that the effects we provide are unlikely to be due to a contrast effect only, but at the same time we do not rule out the potential additional role of a contrast effect heightening direct effects in Studies 1–3.

7. General discussion

In this research, we show ironic effects of reminders of past injustices endured by traditionally disadvantaged groups in our society (i.e., women) on support for contemporary EE policies. Instead of accomplishing the intended purpose of such reminders (i.e., providing context and background on the necessity and roots of these policies), our results show that such reminders can undermine workplace equality efforts. By doing so, we make several important theoretical and practical contributions.

We first make important contributions to the literature on EE policies. Despite EE policies being controversial and resisted, they still tend to be one of the most effective initiatives in increasing the employment of women and racial minorities (Morgenroth & Ryan, 2018). Yet, we see public opposition and even bans of these policies. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a voter-approved ban on considering race or sex in admissions to Michigan's public universities (Barnes, 2014; Liptak, 2014). This is troubling given that traditionally disadvantaged groups still face employment barriers, particularly for high level positions where, for example, women and minority men together hold 34% of board seats at Fortune 500 companies and 91.1% of chairmanships on those boards are held by White men (Catalyst, 2019). Although opposition to EE is often justified by appealing to fairness arguments, we suggest that underlying these rationales is often an assumption of current equality. EE policies applied in a context of current discrimination may seem fair to many, whereas opposition can be justified by pointing to a current state of equality in which no action is

Table 1
Regression coefficients, standard errors, and model summary information for moderated serial mediation (Study 4).

	Collective self-esteem (M1)		Denial of gender discrimination (M2)		Attitudes (DV)		Behavioral intentions (DV)		Organizational attractiveness (DV)	
Predictors	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*	Estimate	*SE*
Constant	5.12**	0.08	4.61**	0.40	6.04**	0.46	6.47**	0.57	7.32**	0.67
Condition	−0.44*	0.12	−0.32*	0.12	−0.13	0.12	−0.18	0.15	−0.09	0.17
Gender	−0.02	0.11								
Condition × gender	0.50*	0.16								
Collective self-esteem			−0.24*	0.08	0.11	0.08	−0.16	0.10	−0.14	0.11
Denial of gender discrimination					−0.62**	0.05	−0.59**	0.07	−0.74**	0.08
Model summary information	$R^2 = 0.03$		$R^2 = 0.05$		$R^2 = 0.31$		$R^2 = 0.18$		$R^2 = 0.23$	
	$F(1,330) = 9.63$**		$F(2,331) = 7.73$***		$F(3, 330) = 49.26$***		$F(3, 330) = 24.63$***		$F(3, 330) = 30.55$***	

Note. Condition is coded as 1 = injustice condition and 0 = control condition.
* $p < .01$.
** $p < .001$.

needed to restore justice. Our research tested and found empirical support for a social identity account for why that well-intended reminders of historical injustice ironically increase denial of discrimination among those whose ingroup has perpetrated the injustice, in turn predicting diminished EE support by men now convinced that the program is no longer needed.

By examining the effect of historical injustice justifications, our work also answers the call for more work examining the effect of EE policy justifications (Harrison et al., 2006). Past work suggests that in general providing a justification for an EE policy, compared to no justification at all, leads to more support for the EE policy (Harrison et al., 2006). Our work shows that reactions to justifications are more nuanced than this and that providing a justification that makes past injustices toward disadvantaged groups salient, compared to the diversity case justification, undermines support for EE policy among traditionally advantaged group members (i.e., men) who were also perpetrators of past injustices against traditionally disadvantaged groups (i.e., women), but not among traditionally disadvantaged group members (i.e., women).

Further, our work also contributes to research on the role of one's sense of self in perceptions of EE policies. For example, Hideg and colleagues (Hideg & Ferris, 2014; Hideg et al., 2011) found that EE policies can threaten *self*-identity of both traditionally advantaged and disadvantaged group members (albeit for different reasons) and to protect their self-image both groups can sometimes oppose EE policies. Similarly, Unzueta and colleagues (Unzueta, Gutierrez, & Ghavami, 2010; Unzueta, Lowery, & Knowles, 2008) found that despite quota EE policies being illegal in the United States since 1978 (Spann, 2000), men and women under self-identity threat were more likely to believe in the existence of quotas, presumably to preserve positive self-evaluations. Our research complements and extends this past research by showing that EE policies also threaten group-identities of members of the historical perpetrator group, which in turn results in undermined support for EE policies.

Finally, our work contributes to the recent work on ironic effects of diversity initiatives. This work shows that a mere presence of a diversity initiative (e.g., a diversity policy, diversity training) in an organization creates an illusion of fairness, which in turn leads members of traditionally advantaged groups (e.g., men, Whites) to legitimize status quo by being less sensitive to discrimination targeted towards traditionally disadvantaged groups (Kaiser et al., 2013). Our work shows that in addition, diversity initiatives that invoke historical injustice can also backfire and undermine support of traditionally disadvantaged individuals by prompting members of traditionally advantaged groups deny the very reason for continued existence of such policies, i.e., that inequities due to discrimination still exists.

Our work also contributes to the literature on social identity and group history, which shows that reminders of past injustices have consequences for present day reactions to group related issues such as group conflict (Wohl & Branscombe, 2008) and compensation of the victims of the past wrongdoings (Peetz et al., 2010). We extend this past work by showing that recollections of past injustices against traditionally disadvantaged groups have concrete consequences in the workplace: they undermine support of traditionally advantaged group members for workplace policies promoting the employment of disadvantaged groups.

Finally, the results of our research have important implications for policy making and management practices. In particular, our work shows that well-intended invocations of past injustices in the context of current equality and diversity policies may backfire; but that this discourse can be managed more effectively if communications are designed in ways that alleviate social identity threat to the traditionally advantaged group (for instance, by attesting to how things have improved for the traditionally disadvantaged group(s) in many aspects, but to reach full equality an EE policy is still needed).

7.1. Strengths, limitations, and future directions

The strengths of our research included constructively replicating our findings across four studies using two distinct samples of participants and in the context of both Canadian and American policies. We also replicated our findings using two measures of discrimination denial and three measures of EE support, establishing that the results are not due to a specific measure but to the underlying construct instead (Hideg & Van Kleef, 2017; Price, Rajiv, Chiang, Leighton, & Cuttler, 2017). Further, some limitations of our work should be noted. The use of student samples (Study 1, 3, and 4) may invoke concerns about external validity. Although we acknowledge that student samples are often removed from real workplace concerns, we increased the realism of the study by embedding our research in the context of co-op hiring (in which business students compete for full-time, consequential jobs that would enhance their business training and workplace experience). By taking these steps, we followed Aguinis and Bradley (2014) recommendations for creating powerful experimental vignette studies, and mitigate the typical concerns about external validity in student samples. In addition, our results in Study 1 were also constructively replicated in Study 2 using a more demographically diverse employee sample, which may further mitigate concerns about external validity.

A second potential limitation is that we focused only on one group that has endured historical discrimination (women). Of course, other disadvantaged groups have suffered historical injustice; we cannot generalize but speculate that similar processes would occur with a focus on other disadvantaged groups, as has often been the case in past research (Gunn & Wilson, 2011; Peetz et al., 2010; Wohl & Branscombe, 2008; Sibley & Liu, 2012). Further research should be done to examine these effects across a broader set of disadvantaged and advantaged groups.

It is worth noting that many of our effect sizes were small to medium, with several key effects on the small side. There are a couple of reasons why even small effect sizes are meaningful, especially in a domain tied to gender equality in the workplace. First, social desirability and the acceptance of egalitarian values may constrain the degree of movement on many measures related to gender equality. As a result, we might expect to see subtle shifts in support but not dramatic opposition. Second, in fields where women are underrepresented (such as engineering in our studies), even subtle biases such as a slight shift toward denying discrimination or opposing EE policy promoting women can further perpetuate the chronic lack of women in such fields (cf. Hideg, Krstic, Trau, & Zarina, 2018). In a real-world work context, individual effects may be small and subtle when considering each biased judgment in isolation, but the cumulative effects of many small effects over time could ultimately greatly undermine gender equality (Madon et al., 2018).

It is also interesting to note that women's denial of current gender discrimination and collective self-esteem were not affected by reminders of past injustices. While we expected that women may be less impacted by injustice reminders because they have probably either experienced or witnessed current gender discrimination to a greater degree than men, we can also envision two ways that women could conceivably be affected by reminders of past gender inequality. On one hand, such reminders could be threatening to women if it made salient the potential for continued discrimination (which is often rationalized by claims about women's inferiority or unsuitability in some fields). On the other hand, reminders of past inequality could have a positive impact because a heightened awareness of past discrimination helps explain the relatively lower proportion of women in some career fields (offering an alternative to the view that gaps are due to talent or interest). Because reminders of past injustice could conceivably have had

both a positive and negative effect on women's identity, it is possible that these two effects canceled one another out. However, our studies were not designed to disentangle these possibilities (whether women were unaffected or if they experienced a combination of positive and negative effects); this would be a fruitful future research direction.

One important future research direction would be to further examine possible interventions for mitigating the negative effects of reminders of past injustices. These reminders provide an important context for modern diversity and equality policies and continue to be part of social discourse. Indeed, while the results of our Study 3 show that men's negative reactions to the EE policy can be mitigated by providing information on how injustice was remedied, even those reactions were still not fully ameliorated. One possible way to further mitigate social identity threat may be to provide men with an opportunity to affirm their social identity (e.g., by highlighting positive values embodied by their social group) which has been shown to reduce defensiveness (Gunn & Wilson, 2011).

Another direction for future research would be to examine moderators of the proposed relation such as individual differences. People vary in their identification with their social group (Branscombe et al., 1999; Ellemers et al., 2002); as such, the more men identify with their gender the stronger their defensive reaction should be when presented with past injustices. Past research suggests that when the value of a social group is threatened, both low and high identifiers with the group may act defensively, but in a different manner with low identifiers distancing themselves from the group and the high identifiers attacking the threatening group (Branscombe et al., 1999). In the context of past injustices and support for EE policies, men who highly identify with their gender may potentially be more likely to actively oppose EE policies, whereas those with low identification may withdraw from the situation and neither support nor oppose the policy.

8. Conclusion

Any student of history might agree that a thorough knowledge of historical injustice promotes understanding of how the past shaped the present, and how past injustice has a continuing legacy. However, this intuition may be at least sometimes ill-advised. In this paper, we examined how reminders of past injustices against traditionally disadvantaged groups, which is a part of common rhetoric surrounding contemporary diversity and equality policies (i.e., EE policies), may have ironic, and unintended effects. In particular, we found that reminding men of the injustices women have faced in the past actually result in strengthening men's conviction that inequality no longer exists. In turn, this (misplaced) belief that discrimination is a thing of the past led to reduced support for the very EE policies aimed to redress discrimination. Our work thus shows that reminders of historical injustice can have powerful – but unexpected – effects on present-day diversity and equality issues in the workplace, and underlines the need to not only consider the information provided (about history), but how it will be received by perceivers who may be more motivated to protect their social identities than to acknowledge collective responsibility for past harms.

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Appendix A

Study 1: Injustice condition and control condition

Injustice condition

Putting history into perspective

'A Snapshot of Canadian History'

Gender inequality, with men having more power, resources, and status than women, has been the most prevalent form of group-based inequality through history. Women have often been at a disadvantage; being underrepresented in the labour force, and being the primary victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. For instance, at the turn of the 20th century, women in Canada had few rights. In 1900, women were not considered 'people' under the law. They were not allowed to vote, to run for office, or to own property. Furthermore, job discrimination on the basis of marital status forced women to be financially dependent on their husbands, as they were not allowed to work after marriage. Moreover, male violence against women was not only common, but was socially and legally accepted. For example, spousal rape was not considered a crime and domestic battery was not a chargeable offence, so men could sexually or physically assault their wives without fear of consequence. Women had so few rights that they were not permitted to divorce their husbands on the grounds of domestic abuse nor infidelity. Furthermore, even if abandoned by an unfaithful husband, she was not entitled a share in the property or even financial support for herself and their children.

Control condition

Putting history into perspective

'A Snapshot of Canadian History'

Canada was tremendously different in the early 1900s. The population was just over 5 million (compared to over 35 million today). Electric lights had been invented in 1877 but most households still used oil lamps for lights. Only 1 in 10 people owned a telephone, and very few people owned cars- in 1900 there were only 200 of them registered in all of Canada. Two out of every three people lived on a farm. People did not yet have televisions or even radio in their homes. For leisure people had social gatherings, enjoyed live theatre and singing, reading, and sports. The average hourly wage was 27 cents, but cost of living too was much less expensive. For example, foods such as veal used to cost 10cents/lb and coffee used to cost 5cents; the price of a typical car used to be $200; and a movie ticket was 5cents.

Appendix B

Employment equity policy

[University] is proposing to implement a new Employment Equity (EE) policy for women for student hiring in [university] co-op programs. EE policies refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of women in the workplace. This proposed EE policy suggests a target hiring rate for female students of 55%. This would mean that the hiring rate for women would increase for co-op positions in which they are currently underrepresented. This EE policy would involve hiring female students over male students only

if they had equal qualifications.

Appendix C

Study 2: Injustice condition and control condition

Injustice condition (i.e., participants read an EE policy with past injustice justification)

INDSCO, a leader in the engineering consulting industry, is proposing to implement a new Affirmative Action (AA) policy to increase the hiring of women. AA policies for women refer to the elimination of unfair practices that prevent the entry, promotion, or retention of women in the workplace. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, American women were not allowed to vote, often lacked access to higher education, and had fewer rights than men. Women have been historically disadvantaged in the workplace; encountering systematic discrimination in employment systems. For example, job discrimination based on marital status did not allow married women to be employed and terminated women's employment upon marriage. When women were employed they were segregated in low paying jobs.

In addition, in today's highly globalized business environment a major imperative for organizations worldwide is to find and hire the best employees and to do so many organizations have started adopting diversity policies such as AA policies. An AA policy would help this imperative by increasing the pool of qualified potential candidates, and thus making an AA policy good business sense.

This proposed AA policy suggests a target hiring rate for women of 55%. This would mean that the hiring rate of women would increase for positions in which they are currently underrepresented. This AA policy would involve hiring women over men only if they had equal qualifications. Thus, qualifications would be considered first, and gender second.

Control condition (i.e., participants read an EE policy that did not involve past injustice justification)

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In today's highly globalized business environment a major imperative for organizations worldwide is to find and hire the best employees and to do so many organizations have started adopting diversity policies such as AA policies. An AA policy would help this imperative by increasing the pool of qualified potential candidates, and thus making an AA policy good business sense.

This proposed AA policy suggests a target hiring rate for women of 55%. This would mean that the hiring rate of women would increase for positions in which they are currently underrepresented. This AA policy would involve hiring women over men only if they had equal qualifications. Thus, qualifications would be considered first, and gender second.

Appendix D

Study 3: Mitigated threat condition

After the turn of the 20th century, women began to receive the same rights and privileges that only men had previously been entitled to. For instance, by 1918, women had received the right to vote, to run for office, and to own property. Shortly afterwards, it was established that men and women were both recognized as 'persons' and therefore equal under the law. Moreover, women also gained some financial independence as they attained the right to work regardless of their marital status. By 1925, women were offered some protection from abusive or unfaithful husbands as women were granted the same grounds for divorce as men. Moreover, spousal rape and domestic battery were both recognized as crimes and punishable by law.

Appendix E

Study 4: Temporally closer injustice condition and control condition from 1970s

Injustice condition

Putting history into perspective
'A Snapshot of Canadian History'

Gender inequality, with men having more power, resources, and status than women, has been the most prevalent form of group-based inequality through history. Women have often been at a disadvantage. For example, by the 1970s, large numbers of women were entering the workforce, yet in many career fields they were treated as unwelcome and opportunities were closed to them. In university, some professors refused to engage with women on equal terms in male-dominated fields, offering feedback, opportunities, and mentorship preferentially to male students. Even after the laws formally prohibited sexual discrimination, unwritten rules in many organizations led women to be deemed ineligible for many jobs (especially in male-dominated science, technology, and business fields). Women who were hired were less often promoted, and often funneled into positions that were deemed more gender-appropriate. This led to gender segregation in the workplace, with women dominating lower-status/ lower-pay careers and kept out of prestigious positions. As a result women earned only 60% the average income of men. Women were unequal under the law as well. Until 1977 it was legal to fire women due to pregnancy, and sexual harassment was not legally prohibited until 1987.

Control condition

Putting history into perspective
'A Snapshot of Canadian History'

Canada was tremendously different in the 1970′s. The population was just at 21 million (compared to over 37 million today). And, only 10% of the employed had a university degree. Most people did not have access to computers and it was rare to have a personal home computer, with the first ones just hitting the market by the late 1970s. These however were very limited, some not even coming with a keyboard or mouse. People meanwhile still were using rotary phones in their house. The first handheld mobile phone was developed in 1973 and was barely portable. Mobile phones were not widely available or common. In the 1970′s, Canada also just began to use the metric system. One would hear of things being measured in miles and gallons, along with Fahrenheit for the temperature. In addition, the average hourly minimum wage was $2.16. The cost of living was less expensive, though. For instance, a typical car cost $3500, and one could attend a movie for only $1.50.

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